

**2005-06 Consolidated Grants Program
Stakeholder Workshop Feedback
July 28, 2005 – Sacramento**

Feedback on Priorities

- ❖ Keep it simple.
- ❖ Be clear with priorities format – regional is good.
- ❖ Watershed or other location-specific information for priority information is good.
- ❖ Priorities on the handout are complex. All agencies line up into categories (e.g., water quality, reliability, sustainability, etc.).
- ❖ Should have funding for healthy watersheds (e.g., education and outreach).
- ❖ Need to be clear as to whether grant funds may be used to fulfill requirements of regulatory programs.
- ❖ Exercise is futile if applicants don't know how priorities are ranked.
- ❖ Rank priorities.
- ❖ Integrate priorities.
- ❖ Like the listing by agency, rather than by category. (Provide contact information.)
- ❖ Provide links to source documents.
- ❖ Describe how projects across regions will work.
- ❖ Identify priorities by funding program.
- ❖ List by river basin, rather than by agency – combine.
- ❖ Make sure priorities do not screen out education and outreach projects.
- ❖ Priorities will be in the Guidelines.
- ❖ Not just a Concept Proposal of priorities.
- ❖ Include citizen participation.

Feedback on Maximum and Minimum Grant Amounts and Match Requirements

- ❖ In the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) system, list all funding sources. Allow for flexibility – pick one or more sources.

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Feedback on Maximum and Minimum Grant Amounts and Match Requirements Continued

- ❖ On FFAST, the applicant should check three boxes for the funding sources that the applicant thinks the project fits into.
- ❖ For CALFED Watershed Program:
 - \$1 million cap
 - Most watershed groups have a hard time managing more than \$500,000 – (suggest \$50,000 to \$500,000)
 - Monitoring, etc. eats up much of the budget (at least \$500,000). Example: Calaveras County.
- ❖ For Integrated Watershed Management Program cap:
 - Sliding scaled based on geographical area. Example: MID & Madera – should have a \$2 million cap.
- ❖ Need to identify the lead stakeholder.
- ❖ Integrated Watershed Management Program:
 - Plans vs. Implementation Project
 - Do not need to have an adopted plan
 - Can finalize plan and apply for implementation money
 - Availability of funding (long term)
 - Agencies working together to look (Department of Water Resources) to the future...
 - Provide extended funding
- ❖ No match for planning projects.
- ❖ In-kind match is important for small entities, non-profits.
- ❖ Consider disadvantaged communities.
- ❖ We do not agree with bonus points (unfair to disadvantaged communities).
- ❖ Lower match requirement for planning – okay.
- ❖ 5% set-aside for smaller projects – okay.
- ❖ No use of State monies; can use federal (319 (h)) funds to match State monies.
- ❖ Watershed groups have had a difficult time with match. It's been a problem having in-place Watershed Coordinators work on grants, and fairly account for their time.
- ❖ Watersheds vary – public/private. Be flexible.
- ❖ There should be a lower minimum grant amount for planning projects – proposed \$100,000.

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Feedback on Maximum and Minimum Grant Amounts and Match Requirements Continued

- ❖ Integrated Water Management Program – proposed a 25% match for government agencies and waive the match for non-profit agencies.
- ❖ Applicant match may be hard (funds/capital) or soft (in-kind services).
- ❖ \$10 million cap is questionable. \$2.5 Million - \$5 Million is doable in given time constraints.
- ❖ Timing of grant:
 - State Water Board should look at the planning done before grant funds/agreement and allow funding to be applied to the previous work.
 - State Water Board should be flexible for each project.
 - The start date is important due to increased match giving a proposal bonus points.
 - Minor delays in grant agreements by State Water Board or Regional Water Board can cause huge delays for project (i.e., a month delay can cause the project to be delayed by a year).
 - Count the grant start date as the date when the State Water Board adopts the Guidelines.
 - In the case of municipalities, a grant agreement must be in place for a project to start.
- ❖ Match funds – bonus points for higher match funds penalize small communities.
- ❖ If local funding match is designated for planning, can it also be used for implementation? Need to be able to use implementation match to be considered for match requirement.
- ❖ Implementation projects – regarding the 25% proposed match:
 - There should be a sliding scale match dependent on the budget of the agency.
 - A sliding scale based on the project would be easier to administer.
 - In-kind matches are more important than monetary matches.
 - No increase.
- ❖ CALFED Watershed maximum grant amount should be \$1 million.
- ❖ Agricultural Water Quality Grant – \$1 million grant cap worked, keep it.
- ❖ For planning projects, \$200,000 is not enough anymore for a two-year project. \$400,000 or \$500,000 is more appropriate.
- ❖ Regranting - In programs that are prescriptive (Propositions 13 and 40) there is no regranting. Maybe Proposition 50, State Water Board legal office is still looking into it. Maybe CALFED Watershed Program.

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Feedback on Maximum and Minimum Grant Amounts and Match Requirements Continued

- ❖ For smaller grant programs:
 - \$50,000 minimum, try to coordinate small entities for a larger project, everyone can get the smaller portion done.
 - Interest in providing small grants but it's difficult to administer.
 - Try to streamline the process for small grants, since the administrative burden is comparable to a larger grant.
 - Request that monitoring and reporting requirements are reduced or eliminated, but in most cases these are required by law. Suggestion that reporting is only done at the end of grant period in grant report for grants less than \$20,000.
 - Tailor the monitoring and reporting to the risk involved to both the State Water Board and water quality.
 - Monitoring: Concurrent or existing monitoring should be utilized in lieu of duplicate monitoring. An applicant should integrate their monitoring with existing monitoring. It should be specified in the proposal when, where, and how existing and ongoing monitoring will be utilized so the applicant may focus funds elsewhere.
- ❖ Disadvantaged Communities – Urban vs. Rural vs....
 - Need to clearly define the term “disadvantaged community” (e.g., state how it is determined by survey, census, etc.).
 - If we want to involve disadvantaged communities, don't leave it up to them.

Feedback on Selection/Technical Review Process

- ❖ There should be an unbiased selection panel.
- ❖ Need to have “quality” reviewers. Reviewers should know or have knowledge of the following:
 1. Technical criteria;
 2. Knowledge of local issues and Statewide priorities;
 3. Need expertise – qualified; and
 4. Integrate with CALFED Science Panel
- ❖ Guidelines should be clear on criteria.
- ❖ Publish minimum qualifications on website.
- ❖ Guidelines will include review criteria.
- ❖ Use specific criteria for all reviews.
- ❖ Comments and scores worked with modification flexibility.
- ❖ Concern over post discussion. Meet first to discuss consistency and fine tune ideas, then do individual review, and average scores in end.

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Feedback on Selection/Technical Review Process Continued

- ❖ Complexity of review process is function of the need for identification of criteria up front
- ❖ Focused review on aspects of applications.
- ❖ Hire reviewers to conduct independent review for technical merit to determine if proposal is technically sound. Do this review first.
- ❖ Administrative folks should do Grant agreement and contract readiness reviews independently.
- ❖ More reviewers would be better.
- ❖ Continue to make reviews available to public --- advantage.
- ❖ Format grant agreement ready – no further contract review.
- ❖ Group who review proposals should have consensus meeting after individual review.
- ❖ Objective criteria link to priorities.
- ❖ Do not shift priorities after the award and during the grant agreement.
- ❖ Consistency in feedback/re-submittal.
- ❖ Educate reviewers.
- ❖ Weighing system. Standard deviation by reviewer. Normalize scores to remove high/low bias by reviewers.
- ❖ Same reviewers for whole set of proposals.
- ❖ Reviewers jointly discuss proposal at end.
- ❖ Incorporate non-agency reviewers --- caution on conflict of interest.
- ❖ Ensure full proposals are grant agreement ready.
- ❖ Review/selection panel need to do a better job of fitting projects into the appropriate funding source.
- ❖ Priority System Comment: Reviewers are typically aware of projects in their area. May score high even if the project is not technically sound or feasible. (Bias – want to minimize). Recommendation: Make sure Guidelines are specific to programs. Cumulative scoring.

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Feedback on Selection/Technical Review Process Continued

- ❖ Sample Department of Fish & Game Review Process:
 1. Staff review each project;
 2. Give scores;
 3. Panel of 2 make recommendation;
 4. Entire panel votes and divide – average; and
 5. Review panel made up of staff and outside technical people.
- ❖ Sample Homeland Security Review Process:
 1. Review panel made up of applicants – multiple reviews; and
 2. Staff works with applicants to complete applications prior to submittal. (A pre-review).
- ❖ Project can significantly change in grant from the review process. Recommend making the review process clear up front.
- ❖ Averaging from individual scores will minimize bias.
- ❖ Discussion is important too. Recommend synthesis the two.
 1. Individual scoring by multiple reviewers;
 2. Come together to discuss;
 3. Return and reconsider;
 4. Then average scores – do not require consensus; and
 5. Require justification for very high and low scores from reviewers.
- ❖ Ultimately well-presented proposals will be scored higher.